

WASHINGTON, D. C., SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 21, 1896.

SLEEP-MURDERING CHORUS OF BREAK O'DAY

Hideous and Diversified Noises Which Rob Washington of Its Beauty Sleep and Are Sanctioned by Law.



An evidently acute observer, and possibly a Frenchman, has said that in Paris one can hear four hundred and eleven distinct noises "on any quiet evening." This sounds like a paradox or a bull, but he only meant that the great city was supposed to be asleep; when the trolley had stopped humming, the wheels had stopped turning, all the lawbreakers had gone home drunk, and the engines ceased throbbing, there were still as many as four hundred and eleven separate noises to be heard in the course of a quiet evening.

We can raise this Frenchman an even dozen right here any quiet morning about that happy hour when the baby begins to

charge so high for front rooms, in which, according to De Wolf Hopper, the sun shines eight and seven eighths of the day in a coach shell or the ear of Dionysius all the variegated yells, shrieks, exclamations, oburgations and rattle of street cars, street pianos, horses, wagons, carts and all the innumerable horrors of a city in which daybreak bustle is the epitome of all the commandments.

Yet there are thousands upon thousands of people who love to hear the devilish din as it begins at daybreak and ends just in time to load up the wagons for another raid on the sleeping city.

Yes, the cestermongers, hucksters, street pianists, devil-crab men and other sunrise merrymakers have their place in Washington. They are one of the oldest industries in the world. For instance, away back yonder in Ben Jonson's time, he wrote:

"If he who turns cries
Cries not when his father dies,
'Tis a sign that he would rather
Have turpins than his father."

This, at least, shows that crying turpins were not an unknown fruit in London in the time of Shakespeare. Since then the industry has increased from crying turpins to all the fruits of the field, the fowls of the air and the fishes of the water. They all cry to heaven, and I yet they have thousands of friends.

First among these friends are the police, and especially those who goon duty at daylight. They don't have to listen in bed to the song of the ripe, the red ripe, tomato, or the green, cholera-morbus cucumber. Second, is that large class of lazy housekeepers, who love to lie abed, while the lately married matron gets up and goes to market, and while the morning stars sing together, and the English sparrows assist in the chorus.

And, third, is the class of conservatives who do not believe in destroying traditions, a sort of anti-ironic society. They are against anything new, if it will supplant an old thing, and it is well known that the street vender of vegetables is a relic of the ante-bellum days. George Washington himself kept a pay ferryboat and quarreled with the boatmen about his financial returns, and no doubt he was a contributor of Mount Vernon watermelons and squashes, or cymelins, to the streets and market of Alexandria.

These vendors are not so picturesque nowadays as they used to be, when they came in from the country with bare legs, check cotton frocks, and a bandana turban, on the top of which was a soft, pad on which rested the light tray holding the strawberry or the raspberry. They, of course, also carried the more prosaic cabbage, turnip, sweet and Irish potato. This was before the day of the ancient wheezing steam ferry between Washington and Alexandria.

It will be conceded, however, that these modern morning minstrels have better voices than the old regime. It takes a good voice even early in the morning to make itself heard over the din of the other noises and sounds of this metropolis. Success in the business is in fact very largely a question of upper register. This the whole city knows from the al fresco opera which is sung every morning, Sunday excepted.

Are they lawbreakers? Of course they are. There is a police regulation which forbids the hawking of vegetables and other truck, but it is so many years and years since there has been a complaint against any offender, that the cestermongers are now practically a branch of the local industries, legalized by custom and sufferance. If any one doubts that the merchants in this trade are industrious let him take a walk after a sugar corn man any morning. Sometimes he goes along in the primitive fashion, with a tray or a wicker-basket on his head, or again you find him a member of an ancient wagon or cart. He hawks out something as he goes along, which, as

soon as you see the green corn, you can translate without a glossary.

He is not content with the mere singing of the song of the green corn or the squash or the bloody red beet, but he, or the occasional boy accompaniment, sings the doo-bell, and must have a personal interview.

After him comes the strawberry man, the raspberry man, the lettuce man, the potato man, and all the other men, women and boys, who are in the business. People are not fully awake to all this until it comes down on them in a Wagnerian burst of melody, and then they remain awake while the street piano does the rest, with the lullaby from "Ermine" and the next thing the pitcher of the window, Macbeth can sleep no more.

One of the most energizing landscapes to be seen anywhere in the world is in a short, narrow street, only one, in Wash-



ington, when it is invaded by the hucksters, cavalry, infantry, and baggage wagons from both ends. A tepid alley in full blast is not a pointer to this domestic tragedy. There are carts, wagons, wheelbarrows, pushcarts, baskets, trays, horses, mules, donkeys, all of which mayhap join in the ensemble of men, boys, women, fruit, vegetables, fish, and dogs, and contemporaneously the asthmatic organ is there playing "Daddy Wouldn't Buy Me a Bow-wow" or "Hear Me, Norma," a rather difficult, if not impossible, job.

There is very often a scene in which the confused housewife is beset by a large part of the gang. The fight for and over a customer is settled by a contest in which the wagon can cosmopolis, or even wagon. The milk has the right of way by some old tradition, while the ice wagon is the juggernaut, which even the underground cable cars go out their way to avoid. Ice and beer are the unmixable mutual blessings. Milk is said to be a blessing in disguise. They can all be tolerated at reduced prices.

You will get a fairly good notion of the Peep o' Day people by a glance at their biographies taken just at sunrise yesterday morning, and reproduced in black and white, more black, on this page.

Some of them are the hubbubins of that sleep which is called beauty sleep, and which is the blackberry or huckleberry season is only possible in a very remote back room. It ought to be repeated in the connection that the times for front rooms ought to come down at this juicy, pulpy, fishy, froggy season of the year. A back

room with a bed solo in a sky parlor in Paradise alley to a front room, "though with pictures hung and gilded for all the sinners the heart hath builded," when they all get around in the morning to tell you about that everlasting red-ripe tomato and the sugar corn. And yet Prof. MacDonald, of the Bureau of Education, is writing a new book in which he is many leagues off from the true cause of local social tendencies.

A CORRUPTOR OF MORALS.

It is only a week ago that a Philadelphian was notified to leave a lodging house in this city because he read aloud the hand-made motto on the chimney this way: "God bless our home," but damn that sugar corn."

In truth, this early Gotterdammerung localism of daybreak marauders is a severe test on Christian self-abnegation, Christian sleep and all manner of Christian endeavor. We are morally certain that if the ladies of the D. A. R., the W. C. T. U., the C. E., the E. L., or the Billington Booth Brigade, knew that most of the early corn-early corn (that is the 6 a. m. variety), the early porker, etc., went into the pot irretrievably damned from all the bedroons on the street they would confine themselves to canned oyster soup in this world and the next.

We have been thinking of asking Lieut. Amis if he intends to let the hucksters cry turpins and things down the long alleys and avenues of the tents of the Christian Endeavor people when they encamp on the White Lot. It has possibly occurred to Lieut. Amis that these people should go away as morally perfect as when they land in this city. As we said, there is a limit to such things. If the hucksters are permitted to percolate freely in the alleys Chairman Smith of the committee of 1896 might just as well change the name of the society to that of the "Christian Endeavor," to which we have all belonged, for these many years.

There is one good thing to be said about the hucksters, and that is that they apparently know not what they do. In this respect they are different from the late night and early morning cats, and yet we have never heard of a nail by the police on the cat roof-garden nuisance. There isn't a policeman in the First precinct who doesn't know that the cat is the dam of the kit, and that the kit when she grows up is the worst of the dam lot.

Even Major Moore, when he made that speech at Atlanta, did not refer to this respect. We presume that he conceived the cat nuisance to come within the province of the fire department at long range.

While the cat business is not strictly germane to the subject, we are nevertheless in favor first of the suppression of the cat outrage on our personal affidavit if necessary, and shall leave the early cabbage question to either the Cosmos or Chase Club, latter preferred.

DANTE REVISED.

There is, however, one thought which is absolutely germane to this discussion of nightmares which will cap the climax should it ever be materialized. Suppose, contrary to the providence of God, it should occur to these shatterers of the atmosphere of the roseate dawn that they could improve their business on the bicycle; and this, about the only thing or business in which that machine has not yet been utilized.

To the mind's eye it is no florid picture of Titian or landscape of hell from Dante, which will then be visible to the naked eye of the man or woman in the night robe de rigueur who listens to the passing show of that day and generation. There will be an interminable procession of vegetables on wheels and a ringing of doorbells, to which the angelus or the curfew or a general fire alarm will be as a zephyr to the lamentations of Jeremiah, played by a brass band, drunk from the piccolo to the bass drum.

Looked at in its most somber light the

life of man who lives in a hired flat is not long at its best. He goes to bed at night like a flower, a pure, pale, lily of the valley; and he is cut down in the morning like a red, ripe tomato. He is buried peradventure in the Congressional Cemetery, and if he ever comes back, it is out and looks over the brick wall, when it is not occupied by the cats, he will in death, even as in life, see around him broad stretches of fields where they raise the things that slew him.

Should he be laid to rest in an intra-mural graveyard, where it is said the rest-ing is just as good as in a suburban reservation, and he a piece for post-mortem examination, you or your wife has any soap grease to sell or rags or money to burn.

We suggest that a commission set on this whole business, and it is not unlikely that the rooms of the Venezuelan Boundary Commission can be had for a meeting, as none of the commissioners understand Venezuelan Spanish, and are consequently now out of a job.

In the interim it might be well to enact a law, making it obligatory upon all hucksters to make their matutinal call at one and the same time. In this way the man who wants to know what you are going to do with your rags, and the mea-who want to know if you want potatoes,



tion, he will, ten to one, see first one of those gardens of the Associated Charities in which they have planted the mealy Pingree. Vary, even in death we are in the soup or in the very midst of things that occasionally hot up in the soup.

We simply present the case in detail, with maps, illustrations, comments, fruit, vegetables, vehicles and the people and things who drag them, play on them or sing in the chorus. Nought has been set down in malice prepense. We would include in the investigation not only those who sell, but those who want to buy; who ring the bell at 6 o'clock in the morning or at 5, if it suits them, and want to know if



rise on stepping stones of his dead past to louder things.

The French philosopher does not specify his voices of the night, and for this and the other reason that he has not furnished a diagram of them we are officially inclined to doubt his accuracy. When we state facts it is our custom to illustrate them, so that even a child who runs may read and not fall down on them. It is the only way to elucidate what might be called vocal statistics.

In point of volume, timbre, vibrato, ensemble, etc., the aggregate voices of the Washington hucksters challenge the admiration of the world. In Paris they may, by

And still it cried to all the house
Sleep no more! Macbeth hath murdered sleep.
Therefore Macbeth shall sleep no more.
Unfortunately, it is not the man who sells green sugar corn by the power of his lungs who is punished with insomnia as Shakespeare would have him. On the contrary, it is the green corn fiend's victims, the human wrecks that have been made by "ripe tomatoes, red, ripe tomatoes," or strawberries as low as six baskets for a quarter who have the atrocious indigestion to plead against these voices of the morning. Their woes are too deep for tears. And

